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## Exploring voting habits and attitudes of LGBTQ+ college students in the United States

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EXPLORING VOTING HABITS AND ATTITUDES  
OF LGBTQ+ COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

A Thesis Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Designation  
University Honors with Distinction

Jordan Weber  
University of Northern Iowa  
May 2021

This Study by: Jordan Weber

Entitled: Exploring Voting Habits and Attitudes of LGBTQ+ College Students in the United States

has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation University Honors with Distinction

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## **Abstract**

Citizens of the United States are regularly reminded of the importance of voting in elections. However, data shows the youngest voters turnout at the polls in far fewer numbers than older generations. The same cannot be said for marginalized and minority groups, such as members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) community. Past studies have shown that these individuals are more likely to vote than their peers who are not members of this community. While there is information about voting habits of both the youngest voters and LGBTQ citizens, there has been little research done about the intersection of these groups. This study aimed to determine if LGBTQ college students voted more frequently than their Non-LGBTQ peers, as well as if they believed voting to be more important. Responses of an online survey were analyzed to determine if any differences exist between responses of these two distinct groups. The results, while similar, suggest that LGBTQ college students may vote more frequently than their Non-LGBTQ peers in elections that are not held at the local level, and believe it to be more important.

*Keywords:* LGBTQ, college students, voter turnout, elections, voting importance

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Throughout the United States, voting is often considered to be a citizen's most crucial duties. In the political system, a person's vote serves as their voice. For members of marginalized populations, active participation is even more essential. For instance, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) citizens have faced numerous challenges in recent years. Issues such as marriage equality and discrimination disguised as religious freedom have come to the forefront of the political landscape. While the LGBTQ community may be but a small percentage of the population, this growing group of citizens has the ability to impact the outcomes of elections (Perez, 2014). However, there is a distinct overlap between LGBTQ people and college-aged citizens. While the former group has historically been more likely to vote (Proctor, 2016) and a higher percentage report always or nearly always voting (Perez, 2014) than their heterosexual peers, the same cannot be said for the latter. Age has always been correlated with voting, as older Americans simply vote more often than younger citizens (Thomas et al., 2017).

Prior research has indicated trends in voter turnout for both members of the LGBTQ community and the college-aged population. However, there is a notable gap in research in regard to how the intersection of these groups turns out at the polls. This study seeks to understand how frequently LGBTQ college students vote in elections and how important they believe voting to be when compared to their Non-LGBTQ peers. Respondents were asked about their sexual orientation and gender identity to determine membership in the LGBTQ community, as this is often a self-identified assignment. Additional questions were then posed with a specific focus on voting frequency and personal beliefs about the importance of voting. Results from the survey were analyzed to determine what differences, if any, existed between the counts,

percentages, and measures of central tendency between the LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ participants.

The number of LGBTQ voters in the United States may be small when compared to the total number of voting citizens. However, this subset of the country is growing, considerably so among the younger generations. Moving forward, the entire political landscape of the United States could be changed dramatically due to the impact of younger voters. As the number of LGBTQ college students continues to increase, their turnout at the polls is likely to have a notable, observable impact in future elections. Therefore, it is essential to have an understanding of how seriously this group of citizens takes its civic duty.



## **Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

What in particular makes the voting habits of LGBTQ people worthy of research?

Despite this being a small population, the group can have a large impact on elections. The 2012 Presidential election is notable, as strong LGBTQ support for former President Barack Obama was a key component in his victory. Without the support of this population, Obama's number of electoral votes would have been significantly decreased, estimated to be in the range of 285 as opposed to 332. High levels of LGBTQ turnout were enough to swing the states of Ohio and Florida in his favor, and it is believed that Governor Romney would have had far better odds of winning the election had the LGBTQ population supported him (Gates, 2012).

In the 2014 Midterm election, the LGBTQ vote again could have altered the outcome of multiple races. According to a report by Flores and Gates (2014), had LGBT voters not cast their ballots for Democratic candidates in elections for a Virginia Senate seat and the governor of Vermont, the Republican candidate plausibly could have been victorious. On yet a smaller scale, lesbian and gay voters have been credited with having notable impacts on local elections, as well (Gates, 2012; Kreider & Baldino, 2015). This population has been influential in elections across the country and has a higher number of voters than Jewish Americans, making it one worth studying and analyzing (Kreider & Baldino, 2015).

### **LGBTQ Voters in the United States**

In recent years, issues directly impacting LGBTQ citizens have been in the forefront of the political landscape. Subsequently, candidates for numerous offices have been required to take stances on issues previously considered irrelevant, such as marriage equality and protections against discrimination. Because of the direct impact policies can have on their lives, it would be feasible to believe LGBTQ Americans would be inclined to actively participate in the political

system. Statistics show this to be true to an extent, as “anecdotal evidence and historical data show that LGBTs are significantly more likely to vote than heterosexuals” (Proctor, 2016, p. 10).

Whether or not the difference is significant has been disputed, but most researchers conclude that this sexuality gap exists to some extent. According to Vanessa Perez in a Project Vote research memo (2014), there is a slightly higher percentage of LGBTQ citizens registered to vote than their heterosexual peers, with 77% of LGBTQs registered compared to 74% of Non-LGBTQs. The same memo indicates that there is also a slightly higher percentage of LGBTQ voters that indicate voting always or nearly always than their Non-LGBTQ peers, at 75% and 71%, respectively. These statistics are echoed in a survey (2013) conducted by Pew Research Center. Of the numerous aspects of political activism, voting was by far the most common act among LGBTQ citizens (Swank & Fahs, 2013; Perez, 2014).

Differences between LGBTQ voters and the general public extend beyond voting. The political ideologies of these groups are notably different. Pew Research Center’s 2013 survey highlights that, unlike the rest of the population, LGBTQ adults “tend to tilt strongly toward the political left...” (p. 94). Of the LGBTQ voters who are not affiliated with a religion, 83% were observed to identify as Democrats or as left-leaning independents. The general public, on the other hand, only had 59% of observed individuals considered in this category. Similarly, Pew’s survey report (2013) highlighted that LGBTQ individuals with no religious affiliation were considerably more likely to identify as liberals. Of the individuals who participated in the survey, 56% were considered to be liberal. Only 36% of the general population surveyed were identified to be liberal. Additionally, the general public was found to identify as conservative far more frequently. While 21% of the general public was found to identify as conservative, only 7% of LGBTQ adults did (Pew Research Center [Pew], 2013). Differences in voting habits between

LGBTQ voters and the general public are observable, even if slight. However, their tendency to lean toward the Democratic party and a more liberal affiliation is clear and notable.

### ***Possible Reasons for LGBTQ Participation in Elections***

Researchers have proposed numerous reasons for the participation of LGBTQ voters. One of the most common has been a feeling of group consciousness. Because of the major impact discriminatory policies can have, those in the LGBTQ community have a shared sense of fate and investment in being politically active (Swank & Fahs, 2013; Perez, 2014; Proctor, 2016). Additionally, studies have indicated “that gays and lesbians who routinely talked with other gays and lesbians were more politically active” (p. 1386), and that the best predictor of gay and lesbian activism is membership in LGBTQ groups (Swank & Fahs, 2013). One would consider it wise to get involved when their own liberties are at stake. This again comes back to belonging in these groups and highlights how fully embracing one’s identity is a crucial aspect of LGBTQ political participation (Swank & Fahs, 2013).

One of the most common methods for anticipating voter turnout is the socioeconomic status of a specific group. Many researchers have indicated that typically, a lower SES will result in a lower level of political participation (Perez, 2014; Proctor, 2016). However, the LGBTQ community has surprised researchers and does not appear to align with this standard. Perez’s research memo (2014) indicated that, while they are more likely to be highly educated, LGBTQ people are more likely to belong to lower socioeconomic classes. However, multiple studies have indicated that this group is more likely to participate in the political process, voting in particular (Perez, 2014; Proctor, 2016). Researchers have not been able to come to a reason behind this deviation that is widely accepted, but numerous minority groups deviate from the standard based

around socioeconomic status (Proctor, 2016). Further research will be necessary to determine possible reasons for this deviation from the standard.

### ***Expected Changes in LGBTQ Voters Moving Forward***

As previously mentioned, issues relating to LGBTQ rights have recently come to the forefront of the political arena. This has almost certainly played a major role in the number of political contributions by members of this community; studies have shown an increase in LGBTQ participation when initiatives related to gay rights are on the ballot (Swank & Fahs, 2013). With the ever-evolving changes in American politics, this point is unlikely to lose prevalence in the foreseeable future. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) found bans on same-sex marriage unconstitutional, leading many to believe the fight for equality had reached the tipping point. However, with the passing of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, there are concerns among the LGBTQ community that a justice appointed by President Donald Trump could lead to the *Obergefell* decision being overturned.

Justice Ginsburg's passing aside, the Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell* did little to halt the advance of legislation aimed at restricting the freedoms of LGBTQ citizens. Moving forward, researchers expect the political activism of this community to continue. It is anticipated that, in addition to a possible new fight to preserve marriage equality, the focus of the LGBTQ community is going to shift to combating pro-discrimination policies and work for the passage of anti-discrimination laws (Swank & Fahs, 2013; Kreider & Baldino, 2015), and the LGBTQ community will be "especially motivated to participate" (Perez, 2014, p. 10).

### **College Students and Voting**

The difference in voting rates between age groups has been an important research topic for many years. It has consistently been observed that "Age is a known correlate with voting:

older Americans are more likely to vote” (Thomas et al., 2017, p. 8). Looking at the turnout statistics from different elections seems to confirm previous research. The voter turnout of four elections from the Iowa Secretary of State (2020) are presented in Table 1. The voter turnout of college-aged students is much lower than any of the substantially older age groups. These results are disappointing, especially since Iowa has historically been one of the easier states for college-aged students to participate in elections. In 2006, Iowa was one of only five states that “specifically granted students the right to determine their own residency for the purpose of registering to vote” (Ardoin, Bell, & Ragozzino, 2015, p. 1181).

**Table 1**

*Voter Turnout by Age Group*

Age Range	2012 Turnout	2014 Turnout	2016 Turnout	2018 Turnout
18-24	56.59%	23.60%	55.02%	37.60%
25-34	57.81%	30.49%	55.35%	40.81%
35-49	72.65%	47.92%	70.06%	57.71%
50-64	83.46%	67.25%	80.11%	71.80%
65+	84.86%	75.52%	83.44%	78.47%

*Note.* Adapted from “Election Results and Statistics” from the Iowa Secretary of State (2020).

Voting data of college students throughout the Midwest is relatively similar to results from past elections in Iowa. According to Thomas et al. (2017), the Plains region of the United States (an area comprising the states of Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota) saw a 48.5% turnout in the 2012 election and an increase to 51.7% in 2016. Some regions did not see as great of turnout. The Southwest region (Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona), for example, saw a measly 38.3% turnout in 2012, followed by

42.6% in 2016 (Thomas et al., 2017). Even with the turnout increasing in recent years, younger citizens have much lower turnout rates in elections than older populations. Previous research has explored possible explanations for this gap.

### ***Contributions to a Decreased Turnout of College Students***

The decreased turnout of college students has been of interest to researchers for many years. One of the notable potential reasons is the climate present on college and university campuses. From a student's first day on campus, they are exposed to the norms, structures, behaviors, and attitudes of people on campus. All of these components can influence the feeling of civic responsibility that drives one to vote (Thomas et al., 2017). An additional component to this structure is the amount of support available to students in exploring the political realm. According to Johnson and Ferguson (2018), "colleges and universities provide little support for students to develop politically, but instead offer many experiences that are seemingly apolitical and that downplay the inherent political dimensions that are present in public life" (p. 511). One of the ways this is perpetuated is through a focus on service learning.

While it has been reported that service learning has been positively linked to political engagement, some scholars disagree. They present the argument that there are numerous limitations on fostering the necessary engagement through this learning structure alone (Johnson & Ferguson, 2018). Instead, they encourage educators to intentionally help students engage in the necessary political work that comes with being a citizen in the United States. Merely exposing students to experiences related to political elements is unlikely to foster an appropriate level of political engagement (Johnson & Ferguson, 2018). An active push towards engagement on the part of the education system is a crucial component to addressing this growing problem.

An additional contributor of decreased college student participation is the overwhelmingly negative view many of the population has of the political system. For many young people, politics are viewed as “negative, divisive, nasty, offering little gratification, and ranged from a necessary evil to something that should be avoided altogether” (Johnson & Ferguson, 2018, p. 518). This negative view of politics has been consistently observed in youth and college students for decades. It is difficult for young people to willingly become involved in a system that is typically perceived as negative, gridlocked, and unresponsive. There has fortunately been an increase in the understanding of political issues to an extent, but students still struggle to tie this to a need for political engagement, resulting in many forgoing any whatsoever (Ardoin, Bell, & Ragozzino, 2015; Johnson & Ferguson, 2018).

### **Specific Factors Related to LGBTQ College Students**

Some components of research can be specifically related to the voting trends of LGBTQ college students. First, according to Swank and Fahs (2013), those who “routinely concealed their sexual orientation were less politically engaged than those who did not” (p. 1390). Coming to terms with one’s sexuality can be a difficult and scary journey. For many college students that are members of this community, this acceptance may not have happened yet. For a student who is still closeted, it may be difficult to be fully invested in active political involvement, whereas prior discussion has shown that active participation in LGBTQ communities increases one’s sense of civic duty and the likelihood of voting (Swank & Fahs, 2013; Perez, 2014; Proctor, 2016). Additionally, as previously indicated, interactions with other members of the LGBTQ community leads to an increase in political engagement. Peer interactions are often recognized as the greatest influence on civic attitudes and behaviors (Johnson & Ferguson, 2018).

Another idea of consideration is that students in social science majors are more likely to vote than other majors. Of all the schools involved in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, students studying one of the social sciences had the highest turnout rate in 2016 at 53.2% (Thomas et al., 2017). This relates to LGBTQ college students due to the introduction and expansion of fields of study such as Sexuality, Women, and Gender Studies at many universities across the country. “Civically engaged students are drawn to civically oriented departments or fields of study” (Thomas et al., 2017), so members of the LGBTQ community that choose to study a field closely related to their identity are more likely to be exposed to other students with civically and politically minded attitudes.

### **Discussing the Literature Review**

One reading this literature review may look back at the title and wonder how appropriately it fits. The current body of research consists almost exclusively of data that focuses on the voting habits of LGBTQ citizens *or* those of college students. Very little research has been conducted that actively seeks to collect data on how LGBTQ college students develop their political identity or compares their voting habits with their Non-LGBTQ peers. If one were to read the previous research on LGBTQ individuals, the data would indicate that college students in this population may vote at higher rates than their peers. Conversely, the previous data collected of college students and their voting habits may suggest LGBTQ college students vote at a lower rate. Reviewing the literature has identified a gap in the current body of knowledge and shown a need for more research to be conducted with this specific population.

### **Research Questions to Be Answered**

As previously indicated, research shows that LGBTQ individuals participate in elections at higher rates than their non-LGBTQ peers. The area of interest is whether this trend can be



detected among members of this group who are also college students, which has been a demographic that is notorious for poor voter turnout. Statistics from recent elections show that this is still the case. Observing previous trends relating to this age group led to the following two research questions:

RQ1: Do LGBTQ college students vote more or less frequently in elections than their peers who are not members of this community?

RQ2: How important do LGBTQ college students believe voting is compared to their non-LGBTQ peers?

## Chapter 3: Method

### Participants

In total, 332 responses were collected from individuals at 22 institutions in 13 states. Of the 332 responses, 46 were excluded. Thirty-three were excluded because less than 75% of the survey was completed. Additionally, 11 exclusions were due to the participant not being currently enrolled as a student at a college or university. The remaining two responses were determined to be *junk responses*. One indicated their age to be 69 and their sexuality to be “Apache Attack Helicopter,” and the other indicated their age to be 420. This cleaning process resulted in 286 valid survey responses.

The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 27, with a mean age of 20.47 ( $SD = 1.47$ ). Cisgender women made up the majority of responses at 72.32% ( $n = 209$ ), followed by cisgender men at 21.8% ( $n = 63$ ). The majority of participants were white ( $n = 265$ , 92.7%). In regard to sexual orientation, 64.69% ( $n = 185$ ) participants self-identified as straight or heterosexual. Bisexual ( $n = 38$ , 13.29%) and gay/lesbian ( $n = 28$ , 9.80%) responses accounted for the next largest groups. For a complete demographic breakdown of all participants, see Table 2.

**Table 2***Participant Demographic Statistics*

Descriptor	<i>n</i>	%
Gender Identity		
Woman	207	72.38
Man	63	22.03
Not Listed	5	1.75
Agender	3	1.05
Genderqueer/Gender Fluid	3	1.05
More than One Selected	2	.70
Trans Man	2	.70
Trans Woman	1	.35
Prefer Not to Disclose	0	.00
Sexual Orientation		
Straight	185	64.69
Bisexual	38	13.29
Gay/Lesbian	28	9.80
More than One Selected	10	3.50
Questioning	9	3.15
Pansexual	6	2.10
Asexual	5	1.75
Queer	5	1.75
Same-Gender Loving	0	.00
Not Listed	0	.00
Prefer Not to Disclose	0	.00
Consider Self a Minority Sexual Orientation		
No	9	69.23
Yes	4	30.77
Race		
White	265	92.70
Multiracial	14	4.90
Asian	4	1.40
Black/African American	2	.70
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	.35
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	.00
Other	0	.00

Descriptor	<i>n</i>	%
Hispanic Origin		
No	279	97.60
Yes	7	2.40
Age		
18	27	9.40
19	50	17.50
20	65	22.70
21	76	26.60
22	52	18.20
23	9	3.10
24	5	1.70
25	1	.30
26	0	.00
27	1	.30
State		
Iowa	262	91.60
Illinois	7	2.40
Minnesota	4	1.40
Wisconsin	3	1.00
Florida	2	.70
Colorado	1	.30
Washington, D.C.	1	.30
Kansas	1	.30
Michigan	1	.30
Missouri	1	.30
Texas	1	.30
Utah	1	.30
Virginia	1	.30
Institution		
University of Northern Iowa	237	82.90
University of Iowa	15	5.20
Iowa State University	11	3.80
Kirkwood Community College	3	1.00
Hawkeye Community College	2	.70
Northeast Iowa Community College	2	.70
Bowdoin College	1	.35
Des Moines University	1	.35
Des Moines University College of Osteopathic Medicine	1	.35
Drake University Law School	1	.35

Descriptor	<i>n</i>	%
Institution (Continued)		
Florida State University	1	.35
Loras College	1	.35
North Iowa Area Community College	1	.35
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	1	.35
Texas Christian University	1	.35
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	1	.35
University of South Florida	1	.35
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	1	.35
Utah Valley University	1	.35
Viterbo University	1	.35
Wartburg College	1	.35
Wichita State University	1	.35
Registered to Vote		
Yes	282	98.60
No	4	1.40

*Note.* The item “consider self a minority sexual orientation” was only asked to participants if their response to sexual orientation included questioning/unsure, an identity not listed, or prefer not to disclose.

### ***Procedures***

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board. The primary location for data collection was a midsize public university. However, several participants were also from other higher educational institutions. Data were collected via an online Qualtrics survey from February 8, 2021 until February 21, 2021. All participants were provided informed consent upon opening the survey link. If they accepted, they were able to proceed to the survey. This survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The shortest recorded completion time was 2.38 minutes and the longest was 5.79 hours, with an average completion time of 10.46 minutes. To participate in the study, individuals had to be currently enrolled as a student at a college or

university and had to have met the age of legal majority in their state of residence. If a respondent indicated that they were not currently enrolled as a student at a college or university, the survey ended and their results were excluded from the study. No compensation was offered for individuals electing to participate.

### ***Sampling Procedures***

Prior survey research has suggested online surveys distributed to individuals with no prior connection to a study or researcher often have response rates up to 20% or 30% (Porter, n.d.). A goal of 200 total survey responses was established for the current study. Given Porter's (n.d.) possible response rate, this required inviting at least 1,000 individuals to participate. However, recent estimates only approximate that 5.6% of the population identify as LGBTQ (Jones, 2021). In order to recruit a number of LGBTQ participants that would be somewhat comparable to that of Non-LGBTQ participants, it was essential to extend invitations to a larger number of individuals. As such, multiple recruitment strategies were utilized that extended the potential reach well beyond 1,000. This was done with the intent of increasing the overall number of LGBTQ survey responses, yet it was recognized that the number of Non-LGBTQ participants would also increase.

By cooperating with multiple departments and organizations at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI), recruitment emails were sent to students ( $n = 1055$ ) via seven campus mailing lists (e.g., Panther Marching Band). The primary investigator (PI) was directly involved with (e.g., a member of) these organizations. Seven other registered UNI student organizations were strategically selected due to their specific focus on politics and activism (e.g., College Republicans). The PI requested the leaders of those organizations send direct recruitment emails inviting the members of those groups ( $n = 144$ ) to participate. UNI's Office of Student Life

maintains a count of the number of students involved in any registered student organization, which is publicly available (University of Northern Iowa, 2021).

The PI identified a lack of representation in the seven listservs and seven student organizations just described, specifically students in the fields of business or the physical and life sciences. Thus, the primary investigator requested a custom-built listserv from UNI's Office of Institutional Research (IR) that would be populated by students in the College of Business Administration and those with physical or life science majors. From the IR listserv, recruitment emails were sent to more UNI students ( $n = 500$ ).

Lastly, snowball sampling was used for recruitment. The PI used his own four social media platforms, which contained several hundred (*estimated*) followers: Facebook ( $n = 1,200$ ), Twitter ( $n = 480$ ) Snapchat ( $n = 290$ ), and Instagram ( $n = 700$ ). The PI sent an email request to fourteen personal connections at other institutions requesting their participation and sharing of the survey link with other potential participants. Upon completion of the survey, all participants were asked to forward the survey to other potential participants. See Table 3 for recruitment contacts.

Recruitment texts were sent to the owners of the campus mailing lists and targeted student organizations. Owners were asked to distribute the recruitment script with their email listservs. The PI distributed the recruitment script via email to personal connections and posted the recruitment script on social media. The PI sent recruitment emails to the IR listserv on February 12 once the listserv had been populated. One reminder email was sent to the IR listserv and PI's personal connections on February 18. The PI also posted one reminder on social media.

**Table 3***Connections Used in Recruitment*

Connection	<i>n</i>
Campus Mailing Lists	
Custom Institutional Research List	500
Honors Students	384
Panther Marching Band	285
Family Services Majors & Minors	249
Student Admission Ambassadors	57
Social and Behavioral Representatives	35
Gender and Sexuality Services Newsletter	30
Mascot Program	15
Social Media Connections	
Facebook	1200
Instagram	700
Twitter	480
Snapchat	290
Target Student Organizations	
College Republicans	38
Northern Iowa Feminists	35
Proud	30
Turning Point USA at UNI	20
Young Democratic Socialists of America	10
Citizens Climate Lobby at UNI	5
Students for Life UNI	5
Personal Connections	14

From this recruitment strategy, 121 (42.3%) indicated receiving a direct email for the study. Additionally, 29% ( $n = 83$ ) of participants indicated receiving an email forwarded from a leader in their organization. Five participants received a forwarded message from another participant. There were 63 responses indicating social media as the venue for their recruitment. Finally, 13 responses indicated hearing about the survey through some other manner. With an estimate of possible contacts at 4,361, the estimated response rate was 7.6%.



## Measures

The survey contained a total of 48 items. For the purpose of the current investigation, 10 items were used to answer the two research questions. A complete list of survey questions is provided in Appendix C. The distinction between those who are, and are not, members of the LGBTQ community was a crucial component of answering the research questions. A participant's LGBTQ group membership was, in essence, the independent variable for the current study. In order to determine LGBTQ status, participants were assigned to either the LGBTQ or Non-LGBTQ group based on their responses to the questions about sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**LGBTQ.** Most participants self-identified as bisexual ( $n = 38$ ), gay or lesbian ( $n = 28$ ), asexual ( $n = 5$ ), pansexual ( $n = 6$ ), and queer-identifying ( $n = 5$ ), and were coded as LGBTQ. A few participants selected multiple sexual minority identity labels ( $n = 7$ ) and were coded as LGBTQ. Participants who selected "questioning" were presented with an additional survey question which asked "Would you consider yourself a member of a minority sexual orientation?" Those who selected yes ( $n = 3$ ) were coded as LGBTQ and those answering no ( $n = 8$ ) were coded as Non-LGBTQ. A single participant who identified as both questioning and bisexual was shown the same question and was coded as LGBTQ due to the minority identity. This resulted in 93 participants being coded as LGBTQ. All participants who selected a minority gender label ( $n = 16$ ) also selected a minority sexual orientation label. As such, analyzing gender identity responses was not necessary in determining which participants were to be considered LGBTQ.

In the current study, transgender participants and other individuals of minority gender identities are grouped with minority sexualities. While they are often grouped into one community, the author recognizes the lived experiences of these individuals may be different.

However, they also share many unique experiences, such as a stigmatized identity, discrimination, and oppressive laws or policies. As these negative shared experiences can theoretically be addressed through the political process, it is possible an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity could be a motivator for political engagement. For this reason, minority gender identities and minority sexualities were grouped into one category as LGBTQ for the purposes of the current study.

**Non-LGBTQ.** The majority of the Non-LGBTQ participants identified as heterosexual cisgender men ( $n = 39$ ) or heterosexual cisgender women ( $n = 146$ ). As described above, a few participants identified their sexual orientation to include questioning but did not consider themselves to be members of a minority sexual orientation, and thus were coded as Non-LGBTQ ( $n = 8$ ). A total of 193 participants were coded into the Non-LGBTQ group.

**Voting Frequency.** Participants were asked how often they voted in six different types of elections, specifically national, midterm, state, state but not national, local, and local but not state or national. For each type of election, participants selected from the following response options: voting always, often (i.e. ~75% of the time), sometimes (i.e. ~50% of the time), rarely (i.e. ~25% of the time), or never.

**Voting Importance.** Participants were asked how important they believed it was to vote in the following four types of elections: national, midterm, state, and local. For each type, the response choices were as follows: very important, important, moderately important, slightly important, or unimportant.

**Political Affiliation.** Participants were asked which political party they most identified with, and the response options included: Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Green Party,

Independent/no party, or other. Those selecting other were provided a text box to further define their political affiliation.

**Political Ideology.** Participants were asked which most closely resembled their political ideology. The options were extremely liberal, moderately liberal, moderate/in the middle, moderately conservative, or extremely conservative.

### **Data Analysis**

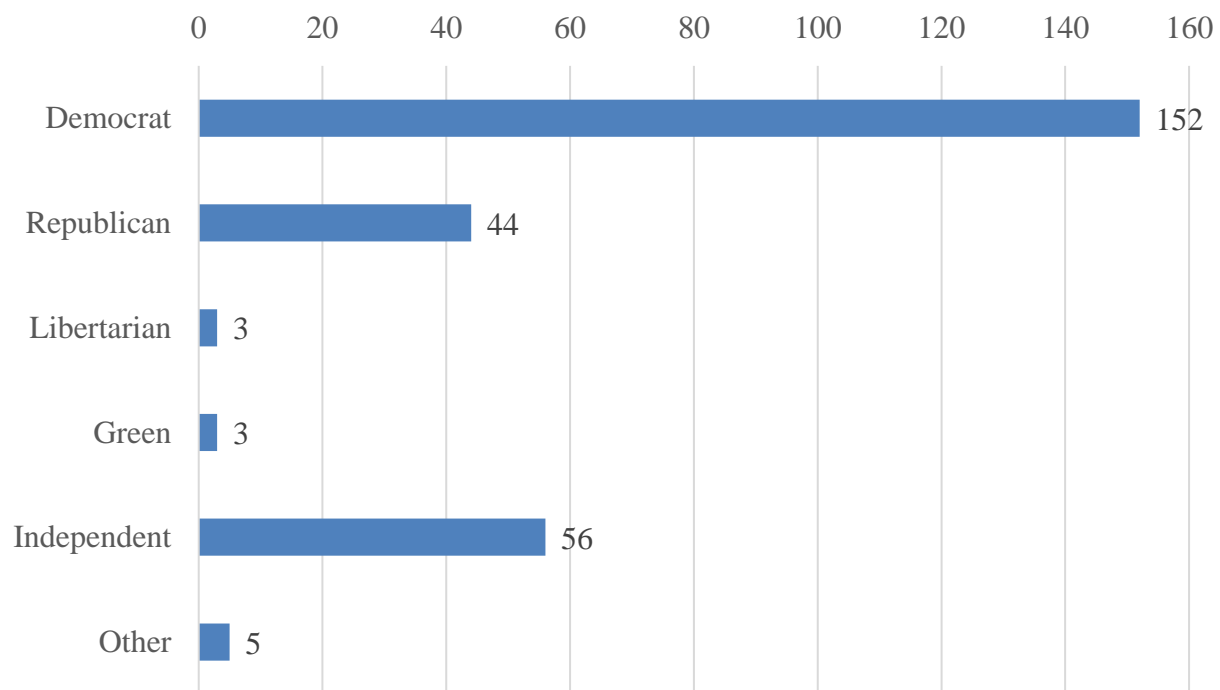
For the current study, the two primary questions asked “Do LGBTQ college students vote more or less frequently in elections than their peers who are not members of this community?” and “How important do LGBTQ college students believe voting is compared to their non-LGBTQ peers?” In order to answer these questions, data analysis focused on descriptive statistics and comparisons of the LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ groups. It is important to note that observed differences between these groups can be identified, but statistical significance of any differences cannot be determined with descriptive statistics. A codebook was created based on the design of the survey. When the survey closed, responses were downloaded, and a data set was created in IBM’s Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS was used for analysis.

## Chapter Four: Results

The following are descriptive statistics relating to the political affiliation and ideology of participants. Almost all participants were registered to vote ( $n = 282$ ), leaving just four who were not registered. Most participants ( $n = 263$ ) also shared their political affiliation or ideology. A majority self-identified as Democrats ( $n = 152$ , 57.8%), followed by Independents ( $n = 56$ , 21.3%) and Republicans ( $n = 44$ , 16.7%). See Figure 1 for party affiliation responses.

**Figure 1**

### *Participant Political Parties*

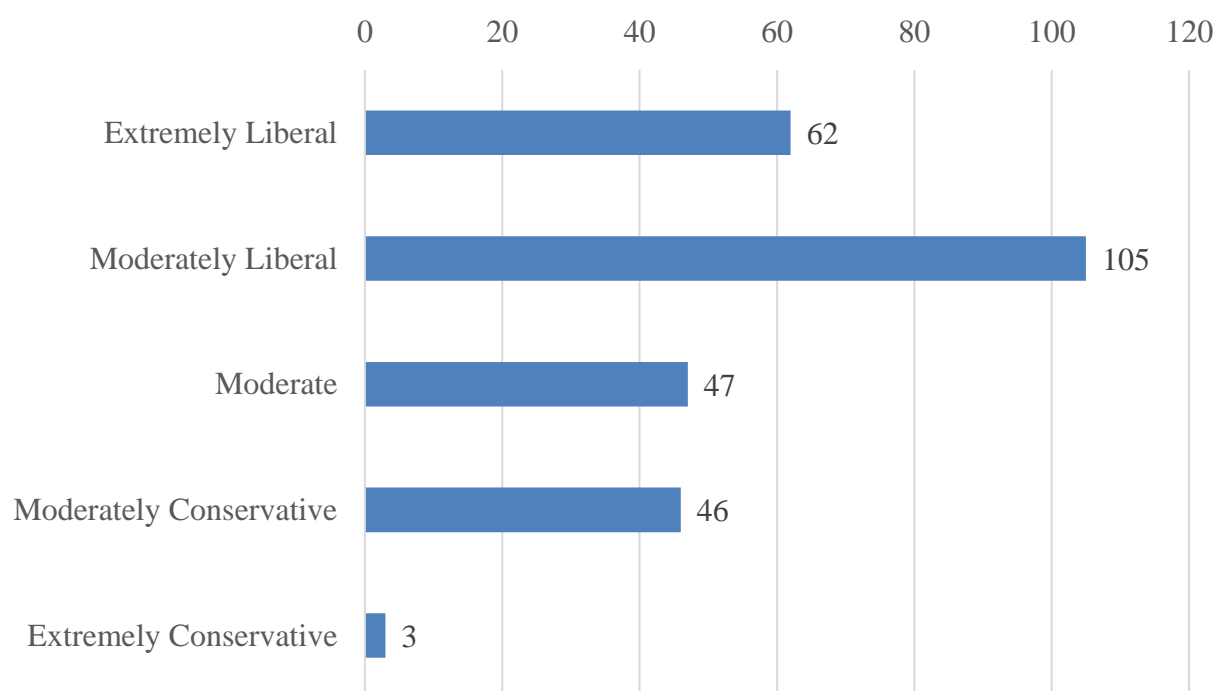


*Note.* The “Other” political party responses were: Conservative ( $n = 1$ ), Democratic Socialists of America ( $n = 1$ ), Mix between Republican and Libertarian ( $n = 1$ ), Republican (Not Trump) ( $n = 1$ ), and Socialist ( $n = 1$ ).

With regard to political ideology, the majority of participants identified as being moderately Liberal ( $n = 105$ , 39.9%) or extremely Liberal ( $n = 62$ , 23.6%). The mean ideology response was 2.33 ( $SD = 1.055$ ), which falls between moderate and moderately liberal. See Figure 2 for participant ideological responses.

**Figure 2**

*Participant Political Ideologies*



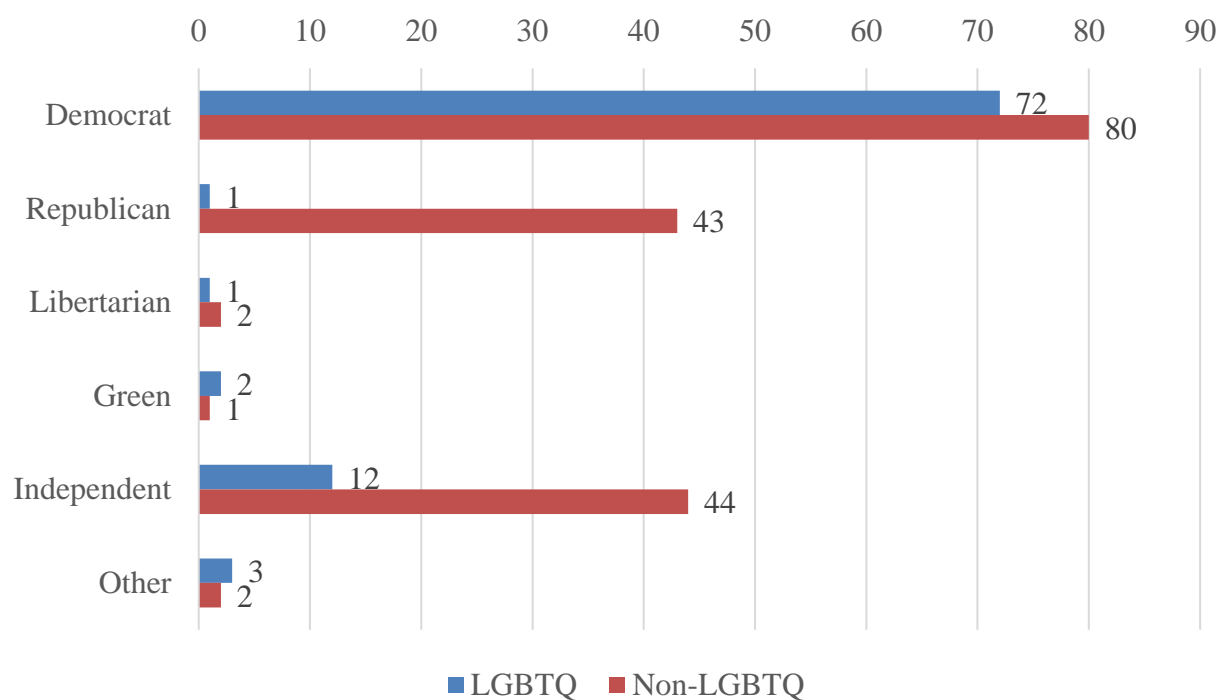
**LGBTQ vs. Non-LGBTQ**

There were differences between the LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ participants in regard to political affiliation. Of the 91 LGBTQ responses, 72 (79.1%) identified being affiliated with the Democratic Party, compared to 80 (46.5%) of the 172 Non-LGBTQ responses. Twelve (13.2%) LGBTQ participants identified an independent political affiliation, while 44 (25.6%) of Non-

LGBTQ participants did. Larger differences were seen in Republican-identified responses. Only one (1.1%) LGBTQ participant identified as Republican, compared to 43 (25%) Non-LGBTQ participants. See Figure 3 for a comparison of party affiliation responses.

**Figure 3**

*LGBTQ vs. Non-LGBTQ Party Affiliations*

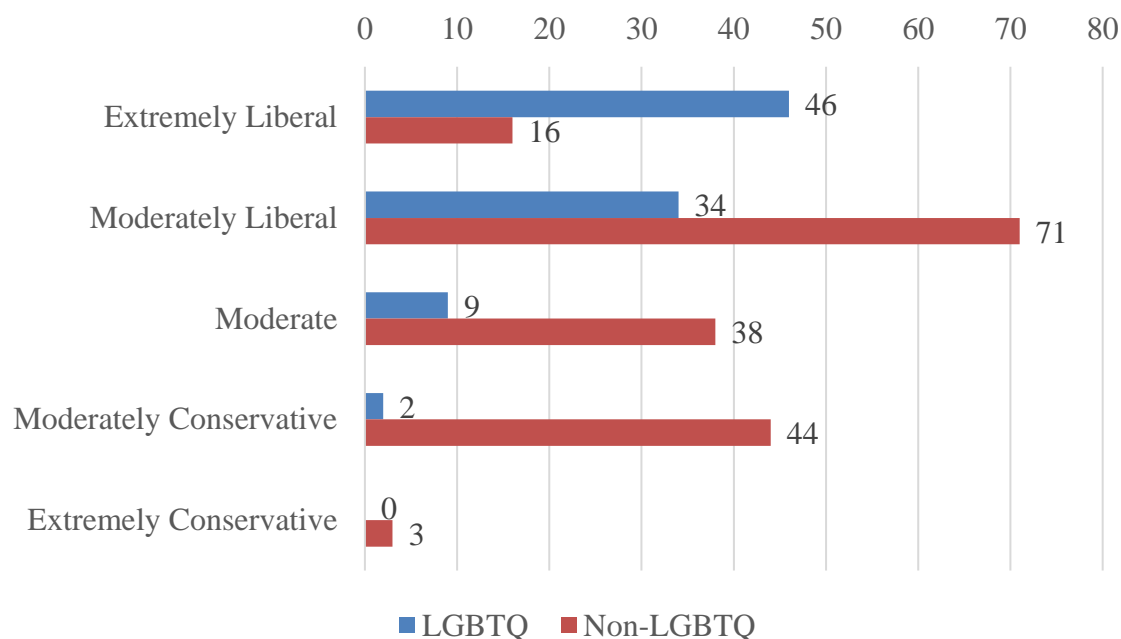


In addition, there were differences between the LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ participants in regard to political ideology. LGBTQ participants were more likely to identify as moderately ( $n = 34$ , 37.4%) or extremely Liberal ( $n = 46$ , 50.5%), compared to Non-LGBTQ participants who identified as moderately ( $n = 71$ , 41.3%) or extremely ( $n = 16$ , 9.3%) Liberal. Conversely, Non-LGBTQ responses were more likely to indicate being moderately ( $n = 44$ , 25.6%) or extremely

( $n = 3$ , 1.7%) Conservative. This is compared to LGBTQ responses of moderately ( $n = 2$ , 2.2%) or extremely ( $n = 0$ ) Conservative. See Figure 4 for complete ideology responses.

**Figure 4**

*LGBTQ vs. Non-LGBTQ Political Ideologies*



### Voting Frequency

The first research question asked “Do LGBTQ college students vote more or less frequently in elections than their peers who are not members of this community?” Across all six election types, the average responses were relatively similar. In national, midterm, state, and state but not national elections, the average of LGBTQ participants was higher than Non-LGBTQ participants. In national elections, the mean response of LGBTQ participants was 3.82 ( $SD = .61$ ), compared to 3.71 ( $SD = .754$ ) for Non-LGBTQ participants. The mean LGBTQ response was 2.96 ( $SD = 1.334$ ) for midterm elections, while the Non-LGBTQ average was

lower at 2.43 ( $SD = 1.463$ ). In state and state but not national elections, the average LGBTQ responses were higher, at 2.96 ( $SD = 1.213$ ) and 2.01 ( $SD = 1.558$ ), respectively, compared to the Non-LGBTQ responses of 1.96 ( $SD = 1.518$ ) and 1.8 ( $SD = 1.422$ ).

For the remaining two types of elections, local and local but not state or national, the mean response of LGBTQ participants was lower than Non-LGBTQ participants. The average LGBTQ response in local elections was 1.79 ( $SD = 1.379$ ), compared to 1.8 ( $SD = 1.422$ ) for Non-LGBTQ participants. For local but not state or national elections, the mean LGBTQ response was 1.12 ( $SD = 1.265$ ). The Non-LGBTQ participants' average response was 1.33 ( $SD = 1.407$ ). Refer to Table 4 for a comparison of frequency responses from LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ participants.

**Table 4**

*Responses on Voting Frequency*

Type of Election	LGBTQ Responses			Non-LGBTQ Responses		
	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
National	92	3.82	.61	190	3.71	.754
Midterm	92	2.96	1.334	190	2.43	1.463
State	92	2.96	1.213	190	2.74	1.322
State (Not National)	92	2.01	1.558	190	1.96	1.518
Local	92	1.79	1.379	190	1.8	1.422
Local (Not State or National)	92	1.12	1.265	190	1.33	1.407

*Note.* Frequency responses were as follows: never = 0, rarely = 1, sometimes = 2, often = 3, and always = 4.



## Voting Importance

Relatedly, the second research question asked “How important do LGBTQ college students believe voting is compared to their Non-LGBTQ peers?” Similar to voting frequency, analysis of both groups identified similar levels of voting importance. In national elections, there was no difference between the means of the LGBTQ ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = .597$ ) and Non-LGBTQ ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = .528$ ) participants. The LGBTQ averages for midterm and state elections were higher than the Non-LGBTQ participants, at 3.51 ( $SD = .789$ ) and 3.48 ( $SD = .731$ ) compared to 3.24 ( $SD = .887$ ) and 3.37 ( $SD = .747$ ), respectively. For local elections, the mean response of LGBTQ participants was 3.05 ( $SD = 1.015$ ), which was lower than the Non-LGBTQ average of 3.07 ( $SD = .929$ ). Refer to Table 5 for the mean importance responses of participants.

**Table 5**

*Responses on Voting Importance*

Type of Election	LGBTQ Responses			Non-LGBTQ Responses		
	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
National	93	3.76	.597	193	3.76	.528
Midterm	93	3.51	.789	193	3.24	.887
State	93	3.48	.731	193	3.37	.747
Local	93	3.05	1.015	192	3.07	.929

*Note.* Importance responses were as follows: unimportant = 0, slightly important = 1, moderately important = 2, important = 3, and very important = 4.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

Some interesting findings emerged from this study's exploration into the political habits and attitudes of college students, LGBTQ college students in particular. First, with regard to political affiliation (e.g., Democrat, Republican), approximately 58% of this sample identified as Democrats, similar to other recent findings of 59% among all U.S. adults (Pew, 2013). However, only 79% of the LGBTQ participants identified as Democrats, nearly 10% less than a national sample where 89% of LGBTQ adults identified as Democrats (Pew, 2013).

While the responses surrounding political parties varied slightly from what has been observed in the past, those relating to political ideology appeared noticeably different. Of the LGBTQ participants in the current study, 88% identified as moderately or extremely liberal. This is much higher than what was observed in Pew Research Center's 2013 study, where 56% of LGBTQ participants identified as such. In addition, this study's entire sample appeared to have a more liberal ideology, as more than 60% of all participants identified as moderately or extremely liberal compared to only 36% of total participants from Pew's (2013) study.

In the current study, LGBTQ college students identified less with the Democratic Party than LGBTQ adults in existing literature (Pew, 2013), yet a higher percentage identified a moderately or extremely liberal ideology. Reports from Pew have noted that there has been an increasing number of younger individuals electing to identify as an independent but still leaning towards the ideological right or left (Pew, 2015, 2018). This could be a possible driver behind lower numbers of LGBTQ college students identifying as Democrats despite a more liberal ideology. Another potential influencing factor in the current study's findings is that individuals with a college education are notably more likely to hold more liberal ideologies (Pew, 2020).

Existing literature focuses primarily on the entire LGBTQ community, regardless of age or level of education. For example, in Pew Research's (2013) national sample of all U.S. adults, 70% of the LGBTQ participants were over the age of 29, and only 68% had received any college education. In the current study, the average age was 20, and all participants were college students. These differences introduce additional variables that have not been addressed in prior literature and provide interesting considerations for future research. According to Lopez et al. (2005), college students demonstrate higher voter turnout rates than non-college students. Could observed differences within the current sample be related to a participant's status as a college student? Does the younger age of participants explain the differences from previous observations? The current study presented unique information regarding the college voting demographic, particularly for those who identify as LGBTQ. Further research on LGBTQ college students is necessary to see if the identified trends can be observed outside the current sample and determine if this group differs from Non-LGBTQ college students. It will be essential to see if any trends are unique to LGBTQ college students, or if there are additional variables contributing to the observed differences.

Results of the current study provide mixed answers to the two research questions posed, "Do LGBTQ college students vote more or less frequently in elections than their peers who are not members of this community?" and "How important do LGBTQ college students believe voting is compared to their non-LGBTQ peers?" While the statistical significance of differences was not determined, the mean responses for both groups were similar in regard to national elections. However, LGBTQ participants indicated voting more frequently than Non-LGBTQ participants in several types of elections, including national, midterm, state, and state but not national elections. Interestingly, for local elections, Non-LGBTQ participants had higher mean

scores on both voting frequency and voting importance than their LGBTQ peers. While the importance and frequency of voting in national elections appears similar between LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ participants, the results suggest that LGBTQ college students may believe it is more important to vote in midterm and state elections, while their Non-LGBTQ peers find it more important and thus vote more frequently in local elections.

Prior research on the LGBTQ community as a whole suggests slightly higher rates of voting than seen with Non-LGBTQ individuals (Perez, 2014; Proctor, 2016). The current study exhibits this, except in local elections. This raises interesting questions about LGBTQ college students and local politics. Many local decisions can have drastic implications on the quality of life for LGBTQ individuals. If LGBTQ college students are registered to vote at their college address, are they less likely to engage with local politics because they do not consider themselves true residents of the communities they are voting in? The relationship between LGBTQ college students and local political systems is worth further investigation.

### **Limitations**

The University of Northern Iowa has been noted as one of the top institutions in the United States for student voter turnout and engagement. In the 2016 Presidential election, UNI's voting rate was 67.5%, which is over 17% higher than the average rate for institutions participating in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement. This shocking turnout of college students identified the institution as having one of the top two student-voting rates in the country (Institute for Democracy and Higher Education [IDHE], 2017). Likewise, in the 2018 Midterm election, UNI's student body had a voting rate at 46.2%, which was 7.1% higher than the average rate of participating institutions. While this rate is lower than what was observed in 2016, it is still a high rate for a midterm election on a college campus (IDHE, 2019).

Whether UNI's commendable voting rates are the result of civic-minded students, awareness raised by campus initiatives, or a combination of these factors, the increased rate of voter turnout at the University of Northern Iowa must be considered when interpreting the results of this study. Completing a similar study on a larger scale would provide a more generalizable understanding of how LGBTQ college students' voting habits vary from their Non-LGBTQ peers. In future studies, reaching greater numbers of students from a diverse pool of institutions, representing multiple regions and demographics, will be essential.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

While the number of participants was substantial, this study's scope was limited. Responses came from 22 institutions in 13 states, but students from Iowa enrolled at the University of Northern Iowa accounted for most of the submissions. Results from the current study are not generalizable to students at other institutions across the country.

The current study used counts, percentages, and measures of central tendency to observe patterns and differences. Thus, any observed differences noted and discussed may be due to chance. Further investigations would include analysis in which the statistical significance of differences could be established and provide further understanding to the questions posed in the current study.

### **Conclusion**

LGBTQ Americans of all ages have a vested interest in being politically engaged. They have been repeatedly faced with policies and laws aimed at restricting their freedoms or allowing discrimination, and this is unlikely to cease in the near future. According to Ardoin, Bell, & Ragozzino (2015), numerous studies suggest that:

Voting is habit forming and that participation or abstention in one election significantly influences future behavior. Thus, when an individual decides to abstain from voting in her first election because she perceives the costs to be too high...the consequences may reach far beyond election night. (p. 1182)

When an individual develops a pattern of not voting early in their life, they are more likely to forego voting in the future. This reduces the ability to stand up against discriminatory and oppressive policies and decreases the ability to fight for the human rights of themselves or others. Results of the current study indicated that LGBTQ college students may vote more frequently than their Non-LGBTQ peers at times, and in some elections believe it to be more important. However, interesting results arose regarding the relationship between LGBTQ college students and local elections, establishing additional questions that will need to be addressed. Conducting further research on the voting patterns of LGBTQ college students will allow researchers, educators, and activists to understand the extent to which this group participates in the political system compared to their peers. The percentage of voters that identify as LGBTQ is only expected to grow. Continued understanding and study of their participation in the political process is essential to the development of an inclusive and equitable society.

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## Appendix A: Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted at the University of Northern Iowa, and the following information is provided to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. Participation in this study is **entirely voluntary**, and you can withdraw your consent at any time by exiting the survey window. Additionally, you may skip any of the questions presented and submit your response with no penalties.

This study is being conducted for research in an undergraduate honors thesis at the University of Northern Iowa to better understand the voting habits and attitudes of college students. Results of this 10-minute online survey will be analyzed to identify any significant differences between the groups of interest. Your responses from this study could potentially be analyzed in new studies or publications in the future. However, responses will be anonymous, and no direct identifiers will be collected. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used, however no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data transmitted electronically.

Participation in this study poses only minimal risk not greater than those of day-to-day life. While you may not directly benefit from participation, completing this survey may have benefits to society's collective knowledge about the voting habits and attitudes surrounding a specific group of citizens.

Should you have any questions about this study, please contact the primary investigator or faculty advisor.

Primary Investigator

Jordan Weber

*Email Redacted*

*Phone Number Redacted*

Faculty Advisor

Dr. Heather Kennedy

*Email Redacted*

*Phone Number Redacted*

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research project, please contact the University of Northern Iowa Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator at *Phone Number Redacted* or by email at *Email Redacted*.

## Appendix B: IRB Approval for Study 21-0082

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### IRB 21-0082 - Study Approval (Exempt, Category #2)

1 message

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Todd Evans <[REDACTED]> Wed, Jan 13, 2021 at 10:52 AM  
To: Jordan Weber <[REDACTED]>  
Cc: Heather Kennedy <[REDACTED]>, Sean Parrish <[REDACTED]>, Rebecca Rinehart <[REDACTED]>, Todd Evans <[REDACTED]>

Dear Investigator(s):

Your study, Exploring Voting Habits and Attitudes of LGBTQ+ College Students in the United States, has been approved by the UNI IRB through the review procedures authorized by 45 CFR 46.104, effective January 13, 2021. You may begin recruitment, data collection, and/or analysis for your project. You are required to adhere to the procedures and study materials approved during this review, as well as to follow IRB policies and procedures for human subject research posted on the IRB website.

If you need to make changes to your study design, samples, procedures, or study materials, please email [REDACTED] request approval of the changes before they are implemented, and attach any revised study materials with edits highlighted. You may expect a response within a couple of days.

Your study will not require annual review and approval by the IRB. However, you will receive an annual study update request, which will ask if the study is still active and if any problems have arisen. Advisors: If your student has graduated, please reply to the annual update request on the student's behalf.

If at any time you observe any problems or incidents that are serious and unexpected (e.g. you did not include them in your IRB materials as a potential risk), you must report this to the IRB within 10 days. Examples include unexpected injury or emotional stress for study participants, missteps in the consent process, or breaches of confidentiality. The IRB will advise on any next steps that might be necessary.

If you need a signed approval letter, contact the IRB office and one will be provided for your records.

Best wishes for your project success.

Todd Evans  
IRB Chair

### Appendix C: Survey Questions

1. Informed Consent Text
2. What is your current age  
*Entered Text*
3. What is your current state of residence?  
*Selected from a list of U.S. States and Territories*
4. Text Clarifying the Age of Majority
5. Consent to Participate
  - a. I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby AGREE to participate in this study. I am of the age of legal majority in the state where I presently reside.  
*(Go to Institutional Questions)*
  - b. I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby DO NOT AGREE to participate in this study. I am of the age of legal majority in the state where I presently reside.  
*(End Survey)*

#### Too Young to Participate

6. Based on your age, you have not yet reached the age of legal majority in the state you indicated, and are not eligible to complete this survey.  
*(Shown if provided age is below the legal age of majority in the state indicated. End survey after text is presented.)*

#### Institutional Questions

7. Are you currently enrolled as a student at a college or university?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No*(End Survey)*
8. Which institution are you a student at?
  - a. University of Northern Iowa
  - b. Iowa State University
  - c. University of Iowa
  - d. One of Iowa's Community Colleges (Please Specify)
  - e. Another Institution in Iowa (Please Specify)
  - f. An Institution Outside of Iowa (Please Specify)
9. What institution do you attend?  
*Entered Text*  
*(Shown if d, e, or f is selected for 8)*
10. What year in school are you?
  - a. 1st
  - b. 2nd

- c. 3rd
  - d. 4th+
11. What is your race?
- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - b. Asian
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - e. White
  - f. Multi-racial
  - g. Other
12. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?
- a. Yes
  - b. No

### **LGBTQ Demographic Questions**

13. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? (Please select all that apply)
- a. Heterosexual or Straight
  - b. Gay or Lesbian
  - c. Bisexual
  - d. Asexual
  - e. Pansexual
  - f. Queer
  - g. Same-Gender Loving
  - h. Questioning or Unsure
  - i. An Identity Not Listed (Please Specify)
  - j. Prefer Not to Disclose
14. How do you define your sexual orientation?
- Entered Text*
- (Shown if i is selected for 13)*
15. Would you consider yourself a member of a minority sexual orientation?
- (Shown if h, i, or j is selected for 13)*
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer Not to Disclose
16. Which of the following best describes your gender identity? (Please select all that apply)
- a. Man
  - b. Woman
  - c. Transgender Man
  - d. Transgender Woman
  - e. Genderqueer or Gender Fluid

- f. Agender
  - g. An Identity Not Listed (Please Specify)
  - h. Prefer Not to Disclose
17. How do you define your gender identity?  
*Entered Text*  
*(Shown if g is selected for 16)*
18. Would you consider yourself a member of a minority gender identity?  
*(Shown if g or h is selected for 16)*
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer Not to Disclose
19. Would you consider yourself a member of the LGBTQ+ community?  
*(Shown if c is selected for 15 AND 18)*
- a. Yes
  - b. No

### **Voter Registration**

20. Are you registered to vote?
- a. Yes  
*(Go to Voting Frequency)*
  - b. No  
*(Go to Voting Importance)*
  - c. Unsure  
*(Go to Voting Frequency)*

### **Voting Frequency**

21. How often would you say you vote in national elections? (This would include any election where candidates are running for a *federal* office, such as President, U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, etc.)
- a. Always
  - b. Often, about 75% of the time
  - c. Sometimes, about 50% of the time
  - d. Rarely, about 25% of the time
  - e. Never
22. How often would you say you vote in midterm elections? (This would include any election where you are voting for a federal office but the President is NOT on the ballot.)
- a. Always
  - b. Often, about 75% of the time
  - c. Sometimes, about 50% of the time
  - d. Rarely, about 25% of the time
  - e. Never

23. How often would you say you vote in state elections? (This would include any election where candidates are running for a *state* office, such as Governor, State House of Representatives, State Senate, etc.)
- Always
  - Often, about 75% of the time
  - Sometimes, about 50% of the time
  - Rarely, about 25% of the time
  - Never
24. How often would you say you vote in state elections when NOT also voting in a national election?
- Always
  - Often, about 75% of the time
  - Sometimes, about 50% of the time
  - Rarely, about 25% of the time
  - Never
25. How often would you say you vote in local elections? (This would include any election where candidates are running for a *local* office, such as city or county positions or a spot on the school board.)
- Always
  - Often, about 75% of the time
  - Sometimes, about 50% of the time
  - Rarely, about 25% of the time
  - Never
26. How often would you say you vote in local elections when NOT also voting in a state or national election?
- Always
  - Often, about 75% of the time
  - Sometimes, about 50% of the time
  - Rarely, about 25% of the time
  - Never

**Voting Importance**

27. How important do you believe it is to vote in *national* elections?
- Very Important
  - Important
  - Moderately Important
  - Slightly Important
  - Unimportant
28. How important do you believe it is to vote in *midterm* elections?
- Very Important
  - Important

- c. Moderately Important
  - d. Slightly Important
  - e. Unimportant
29. How important do you believe it is to vote in *state* elections?
- a. Very Important
  - b. Important
  - c. Moderately Important
  - d. Slightly Important
  - e. Unimportant
30. How important do you believe it is to vote in *local* elections?
- a. Very Important
  - b. Important
  - c. Moderately Important
  - d. Slightly Important
  - e. Unimportant

### **Following Gov Affairs**

31. Presented Text:
- For the purposes of this study, “Following Government Affairs” can be defined as actively working to inform yourself of current events in the government, such as reading your Congressperson’s newsletter or watching the news to stay informed.
32. How often would you say you follow government affairs at the national level?
- a. Always
  - b. Often, about 75% of the time
  - c. Sometimes, about 50% of the time
  - d. Rarely, about 25% of the time
  - e. Never
33. How often would you say you follow government affairs at the state level?
- a. Always
  - b. Often, about 75% of the time
  - c. Sometimes, about 50% of the time
  - d. Rarely, about 25% of the time
  - e. Never
34. How often would you say you follow government affairs at the local level?
- a. Always
  - b. Often, about 75% of the time
  - c. Sometimes, about 50% of the time
  - d. Rarely, about 25% of the time
  - e. Never
35. How frequently do you seek out information about politics during an election cycle?
- a. Daily



- b. A Few Times per Week
  - c. Weekly
  - d. Monthly
  - e. Less than Monthly
  - f. Never
36. How frequently do you seek out information about politics when there is not an election occurring?
- a. Daily
  - b. A Few Times per Week
  - c. Weekly
  - d. Monthly
  - e. Less than Monthly
  - f. Never
37. How often do you search for political updates online?
- a. Daily
  - b. A Few Times per Week
  - c. Weekly
  - d. Monthly
  - e. Less than Monthly
  - f. Never

**Political Involvement and Activity**

38. Have you ever been involved in a political campaign?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
39. Have you ever contacted one of your elected officials regarding an issue of concern?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
40. Do you wear political apparel or display items such as buttons supporting a certain cause or candidate?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
41. Do you share political information on social media when it relates to an issue you are passionate about?
- a. Frequently
  - b. Occasionally
  - c. Rarely
  - d. Never
42. Have you attended a political rally held on a college campus?
- a. Yes
  - b. No

43. Do you encourage your friends or peers to vote?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
44. How similar would you say you and your peers are in your political involvement and beliefs?
- a. Extremely Similar
  - b. Moderately Similar
  - c. Neither Similar or Dissimilar
  - d. Moderately Dissimilar
  - e. Extremely Dissimilar
45. Are you involved in a campus organization focused on politics or activism?
- a. Yes
  - b. No

**Political Identity/Demographics**

46. Would you be willing to share information related to your political identity? Selecting no will not invalidate or disqualify your response.
- a. Yes  
(Show 47 and 49)
  - b. No  
(Skip 47 and 49)
47. In politics today, which political party do you most identify with?
- a. Democratic Party
  - b. Republican Party
  - c. Libertarian Party
  - d. Green Party
  - e. Independent/No Party
  - f. Some Other Political Party (Please Specify)
48. Which political party do you identify with?
- Entered Text*  
(Shown if f is selected for 47)
49. Which of the following most closely resembles your political ideology?
- a. Extremely Liberal
  - b. Moderately Liberal
  - c. Moderate/In the Middle
  - d. Moderately Conservative
  - e. Extremely Conservative

**Open-Ended**

50. Presented Text:

The following open-ended questions are entirely optional. Don't forget that all survey

submissions are anonymous, so your responses to these questions will not be connected to you. If you would prefer not to answer these questions, simply leave them blank.

51. Tell us more about your voting habits. To what extent do you vote? Why? What inspires your voting habits?

*Entered Text*

52. Tell us more about your political involvement. To what extent do you engage in politics? Why?

*Entered Text*

### **How Contacted**

53. How did you hear about this survey?

- a. Direct email from a member of the research team
- b. Forwarded message from a student organization leader
- c. Forwarded message from an individual who completed the survey
- d. Social Media Post
- e. Other

### **Debriefing Script**